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Proctor
AN ADDRESS

ON THE

MORAL AND PHYSICAL EVILS

RESULTING FROM A

LECT OF SANITARY MEASURES,

DELIVERED AT

PUBLIC MEETING OF THE INHABITANTS OF PUTNEY,
30TH OCTOBER, 1848,

BY

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EPIDEMIC OF 1837," A PAPER ON "THE VALUE OF NITROUS ACID IN
THE TREATMENT OF CHOLERA AND CHOLERAIC DIARRHOEA," &c. &c.

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“ Health is a great matter, both to the possessor of it and to others. On the whole, that humourist in the Moral Essay was not so far out, who determined on honouring health only; and so, instead of humbling himself to the high-born, to the rich and well-dressed, insisted on doffing hat to the healthy; coronetted carriages, with pale faces in them, passed by as failures, miserable and lamentable; trucks with ruddy-cheeked strength dragging at them, were greeted as successful and venerable. For does not health mean harmony, the synonym of all that is true, justly ordered, good? is it not, in some sense, the net total, as shewn by experiment, of whatever worth is in us? The healthy man is a most meritorious product of nature, so far as he goes. A healthy body is good; but a soul in right health, it is the thing beyond all others to be prayed for; the blesseddest thing this earth receives of heaven.”—CARLYLE.

TO THE BOARD OF WORKS

OF THE

WANDSWORTH DISTRICT,

THIS ADDRESS IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

AND PRESENTED,

AS A TRIFLING CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE PROMOTION OF

THE SANITARY CAUSE,

AND AS

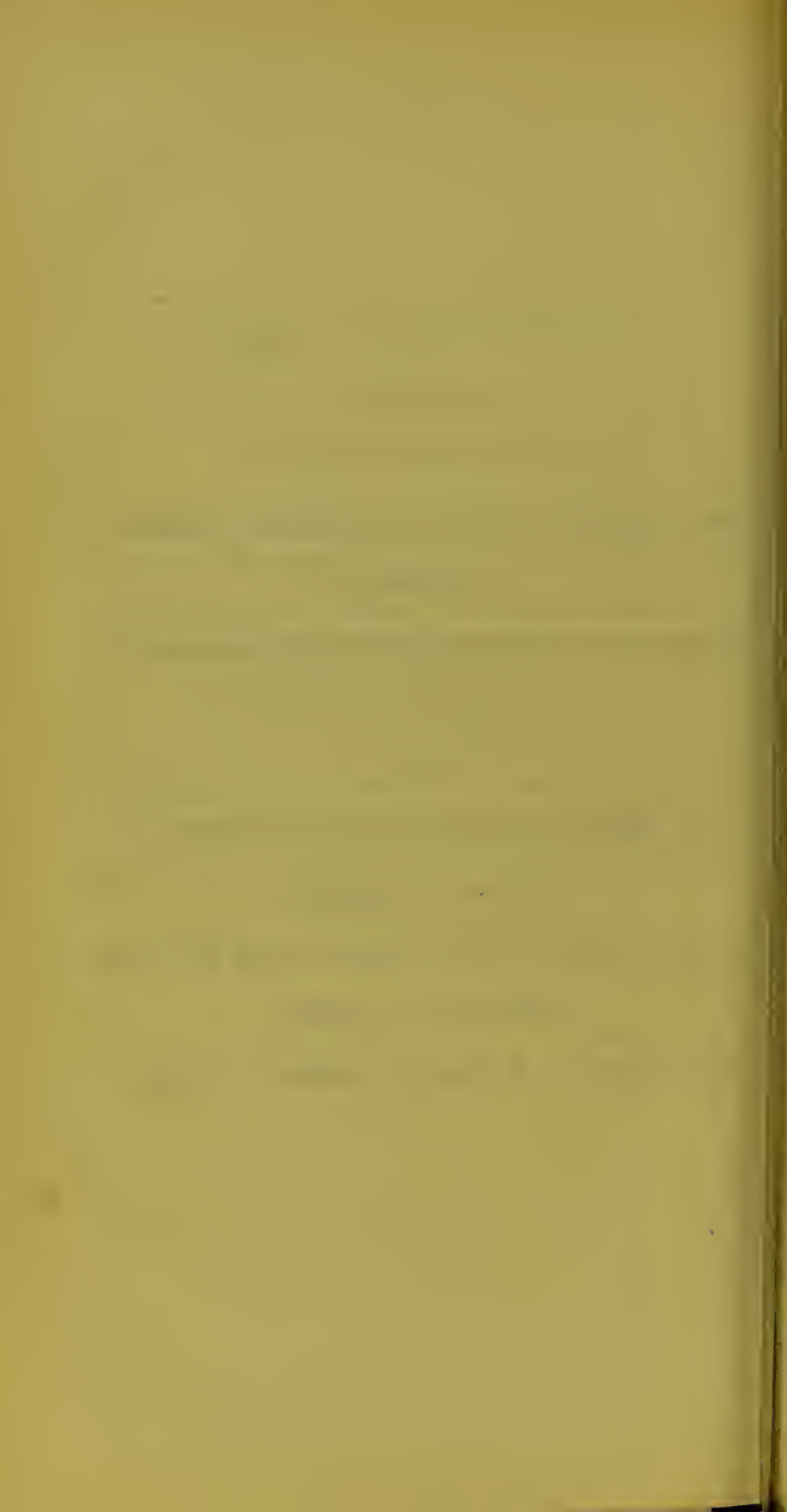
A PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE CONDITION

(PAST AND PRESENT)

OF THE LOCALITY IN WHICH THE AUTHOR HAS BEEN

APPOINTED TO PERFORM

THE DUTIES OF A MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.



INTRODUCTION.

SEVEN years ago sanitary reform began, for the first time, to find its advocates in this district, and to engage the serious attention of its inhabitants. The delivery of a public address at that period in the small but improving suburb of Putney, upon subjects bearing upon the public health, has not been chronicled as an event of much importance, and may seem to many to merit no particular notice. It is remembered, however, by a few as the beginning of some good influences; for, although a trifling matter in itself, it may be said to have inaugurated a by no means unimportant movement in the locality, which it is hoped will not soon pass away.

There is, indeed, a greater need than ever that this movement should be continued, now that the local authorities have received greatly extended executive powers with reference to sanitary improvements.

It has been well observed by an authority on sanitary matters, that "Ill ventilation, filthy habitations, bad drainage, and imperfect water supply, must still be made subjects for what our political brethren call 'a movement.' Staple topics these, sounder and far more important to the general weal than most of the nostrums urged by political quacks of all denominations. This is a species of agitation in which the profession may with every propriety join, and in which, by private and public representations, they may do signal service."

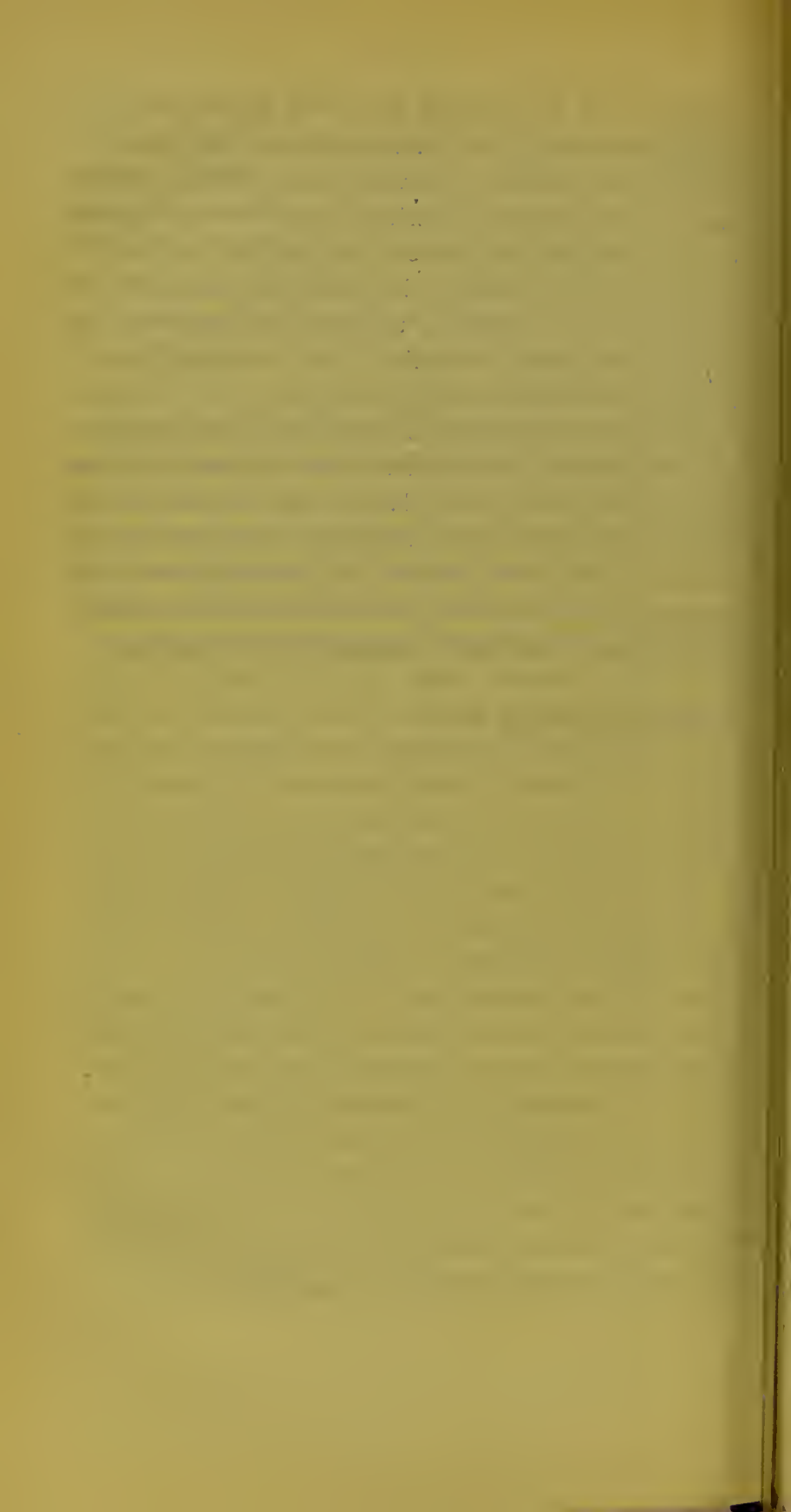
As one who has been elected to assist, as a Medical Officer of Health, in carrying out in his own neighbourhood the sanitary provisions of the recent Act for the "Better Local Management of the Metropolis," the author of this little pamphlet must necessarily feel anxious to promote by all the means in his power the "movement" here referred to. If, then, he can succeed in convincing but half a dozen inhabitants that something more than a mere periodical cleansing of gutters, emptying of cesspools, and such like half measures of sanitary reform, is required for this district, in order to render it what it ought to be—one of the most healthy and well conducted suburban localities within the Bills of Mortality—he will consider he has not addressed his neighbours entirely in vain.

Of the vexed question as to the person best qualified to advise the local authorities upon matters relating to the public health, and to take the lead in superintending the sanitary arrangements of the district under the new Act, it will, perhaps, ill become the writer to speak in this place; but he cannot avoid remarking that, inasmuch as one of the most important functions attaching to the position of a Medical Officer of Health, in whatever locality he may act, will be that of a teacher of preventive medicine to the public—the poorer members of that public being, in most instances, his pupils—the Poor Law Medical Officer, from his very position, and from the interest he must necessarily take in the means of keeping the rate of sickness and mortality in his neighbourhood at its *minimum*, can scarcely fail, with ordinary industry and perseverance, to render himself efficient in such office. Whatever, then, may be considered to be the *special* qualifications for the position in question by those who have had but slight opportunities of judging of the previous sanitary labours of the union

surgeons, and how greatly their best efforts have been hitherto frustrated by the want of sufficient legal powers to enforce their measures, the writer trusts the means that have been employed by himself to secure the co-operation of his neighbours, will prove to all that he has been, at least, in earnest in what he has done, and earnestness of purpose alone, he ventures to hope, will ensure for the friendly admonitions embodied in the following pages a favourable consideration.

It is almost unnecessary to add that since the period at which this address was delivered, extensive and important improvements have taken place in the district. A few notes have therefore been added to this reprint of the original lecture, with the view of rendering more plain those portions of it which had reference to the sanitary requirements of the locality upwards of seven years ago.

PUTNEY, *January* 1856.



ADDRESS.

FELLOW TOWNSMEN,

As an Union Medical Officer I have had springing out of my position peculiar interests and duties which have obliged me, both here and at other places in which I have held similar appointments to the one I now fill, to pay some considerable attention to the various physical causes which increase the rate of sickness and mortality amongst the poor. That I should feel then, desirous of awakening your most serious attention to a few general principles to be observed in the removal of these causes, cannot excite the surprise of any one—the less so, since from the late unfortunate outbreak of cholera in this district, my duties have not only been most materially increased, but my responsibilities, in common with those of almost every Union surgeon in the kingdom, have been made as great as any that have ever attached, or probably ever will attach, to a public officer.

In the whole range of agencies which exercise an influence upon the sanitary condition of even small communities, there is not, I am certain, one more deeply affecting the interests of the ratepayers, and the character of a locality, than the improvement, and the effectual cleansing and draining of the dwelling places of the poor. No one rightly comprehending the full bearings of the sanitary question can well dispute the truth of this remark, but there are unfortunately too many whose prejudices are not easily overcome, but whose cordial co-operation in

carrying into proper effect the legislative measures for securing the public health, it is for many reasons, most essential to secure.

To those persons, then, who may fancy their interests best served by a continuation of the present order of things, I desire more particularly to address myself, since I am quite satisfied that it requires but a plain unvarnished statement of facts to cause very many persons who have never yet bestowed a serious thought upon the subject, to at once perceive and acknowledge that the provisions of the several enactments that have recently passed the legislature, are in every way, in relation to the public health, most wise and necessary securities.

“ From accurate calculations, based on the observation of carefully recorded facts, it is rendered certain,” we are told by Dr. Southwood Smith, the medical member of the Health of Towns Commission, “ that the annual slaughter in England alone, by causes *that are preventable*, by causes that produce only one disease, namely, typhus fever, is more than double the loss sustained by the allied armies in the battle of Waterloo; that 136 persons perish every day in England alone, *whose lives might be saved*; that in one single city, namely, Manchester, thirteen thousand three hundred and sixty-two children have perished in seven years over and above the mortality natural to mankind.”

“ It appears, moreover,” says the same physician, addressing himself to the working classes, “ that the field in which this annual slaughter takes place is always and everywhere the locality in which you (the poor) reside, and that it is you and your wives and children who are the victims. In some instances, in the streets, courts, and alleys in which you live, the mortality which afflicts you is nearly double, and in others it is quite double that of the inhabitants of other streets in the same district, and in adjoining districts. While the average age at death of the gentry and of professional persons and their families is forty-four, the average

age at death attained by you and your families in many instances, is only twenty-two—just one half; that is to say, comparing your condition with that of the gentry and professional persons, you and your families are deprived of one half of your natural term of life.”

“ The causes of this high mortality,” says the Registrar-General, “ have been traced to crowded lodgings, dirty dwellings, personal uncleanness, and the concentration of unhealthy emanations from narrow streets without fresh air, water, or sewerage.”

The above picture, so faithfully pencilled, but in no way coloured by Dr. Smith, is indeed a most frightful one; but there are some statistics put forward by the Health of Towns Association, with reference to the sickness and mortality in the Metropolis and suburbs, quite as appalling. Out of nearly two millions of inhabitants within the Bills of Mortality, it is calculated that 50,000 die every year, being about one in every forty. In the year 1844 a calculation founded on the return of the Registrar-General gives 50,423 as the number of deaths, or one in thirty-nine, and 10,278 as the waste of life. In the same year it was ascertained that there had been twenty-eight attacks of sickness to every death, which gives for the twelve months 287,784 cases of unnecessary sickness! Let me entreat you to bear this fact in mind,—*Ten thousand deaths, and a quarter of a million of cases of sickness in one short year, most of them, in all probability, preventable.* According to a detailed estimate made by Dr. Lyon Playfair, the talented Professor of Chemistry at the College for Civil Engineers in this town, the inhabitants of the Metropolis (I am not sure whether the suburbs are included in the calculation) waste or misapply every year from a neglect of sanitary measures, no less a sum than £3,204,531, being very little short of *three and a quarter millions sterling !!!* Now this waste of money is perfectly astounding, and certainly would not be credited, had the statement been made upon any doubtful authority. Dr. Playfair, however, is not the man to put forth such a

calculation with a view of deceiving the public. It may, therefore, I think, be unhesitatingly relied upon.

But some of my hearers may perhaps be disposed to exclaim, "This may be all very true as regards the Metropolis itself, but it surely cannot apply to the suburban localities, or to the towns and villages remote from the leviathan city."

Suffer me, however, to ask you these questions. Do you think there are no unnecessary deaths—no unnecessary or preventable cases of sickness in this district? Do you imagine that no loss is sustained, nor money misapplied by the suburb as well as the city, through a neglect of sanitary measures? If you will bear with me for a few minutes whilst I refer to some further statistics, I believe I shall be able to prove to you, that, although most of the towns in this union possess an advantage over many parts of the Metropolis, as to the rate of mortality, we are certainly not in a condition to boast greatly of our freedom from sickness, and from the many ills which disease amongst the poor entails upon communities.

Upon consulting the returns of the Registrar of births and deaths of this parish, which includes of course the hamlet of Roehampton, I find that the rate of mortality, the average number of deaths being taken as ninety in the year, is eighteen in 1000, or exactly one in fifty-six. I do not exactly know what the rate of mortality may be in some of the towns by which we are surrounded, but the one death in every fifty-six of the population of Putney is certainly higher than in many of the suburban districts both North and South of the Thames, possessing advantages far inferior to this town as regards facilities for drainage, ventilation, supply of water, and the like. In this respect indeed, we are not more than upon a par with some of the more healthy districts of the Metropolis, and this is not saying a very great deal for a pleasant, and by no means densely populated suburb, of which so much is always expected. In many districts of London, it is true, the rate of mortality is as high as one in thirty-three.

but then this is only in the very unhealthy parts,—in other districts it is one in fifty-six, the very same as in Putney, and yet Putney is represented and generally believed to be infinitely before any part of London in point of salubrity and freedom from those influences which generate disease and tend to shorten the existence of its inhabitants.

That there should be so slight a difference, and in some few instances no difference at all, between the rate of mortality in certain portions of London and the open suburbs, may excite the surprise of many; but the truth should nevertheless be told, lest we should go to sleep over sanitary measures, and forget that some of our neighbours, who are fully alive to the necessity of giving attention to the public health, may very quickly reverse the relative positions in which we now stand, and leave us immeasurably behind in the work of improvement. If we are more healthy (and I believe it will be found that we are) than many of the neighbouring localities, I say, let us use our best exertions to maintain that superiority. We must not fold our arms and wait until we have lost caste by comparison, and then expect to overtake our neighbours in a day. All that we require in the way of sanitary reform cannot be acquired without labour, it cannot be attained without individual exertion and perseverance. Though the Government may be able to furnish us with instructions—though it has given us the power, by certain Acts of Parliament, to begin the good work, which we before possessed not, it cannot ensure us what we covet, or rather what we ought to covet, without our own efforts are put forth. There is no seizing all the advantages to be derived from sanitary reform at one grasp, our progress must be gradual, that our improvements may be valuable and lasting. Much patience will, therefore, be required; much industry and much resolution. With these qualities influencing those who may take upon themselves the initiative, difficulties will soon vanish; means will gradually open to them for accomplishing all

that may be desired ; and ultimately Putney and the other towns in this union shall stand proudly forth, and proclaim themselves as healthy suburbs as any within the Bills of Mortality.

I just now stated that I believed myself able to prove that, although this town and many others in this union possess a slight advantage over some of the neighbouring localities of the Metropolis, as to the rate of mortality, we were not in a position to boast greatly of our freedom from fatal sickness amongst the poor. Let us see what further statistics can be found in support of this assertion. Through the assistance of the Registrar of the district, who, some time since, allowed me to go over the mortality returns in his possession, I was enabled to make a tolerably complete analysis of the deaths in this parish in a single year, viz.—in 1844. I fixed upon that year, not only because it happened to be the first that presented itself upon opening the books, but because it seemed to be a period in which no particular epidemic had prevailed to cause the rate of mortality to wear an exaggerated appearance. I find then, in that year, exactly eighty-nine deaths took place in Putney. Of this number fifty-one were males and thirty-eight were females. Of the total number considerably more than one-third were children under four years of age. These eighty-nine deaths were distributed as follows :—

Amongst the families of the gentry and professional men	11
Amongst tradespeople	12=89
Amongst the labouring classes	66 !

You will perceive, then, even though we allow the labouring classes to out-number the gentry and tradespeople in the proportion of two to one, the mortality will have been most excessive amongst the poor*.

* The sickness amongst the poor in this parish has been found to increase considerably with the increase of population ; but a most gratifying circumstance is, that the mortality amongst the same class has diminished in an

The mean duration of life of the inhabitants of the towns in this union is, I believe, thirty-six years, or thereabouts, and, as far as my calculations have extended, (and I think I rather under than overstate the matter) the average age at death will be found to be, amongst the gentry, fifty-five years, whilst amongst the labouring population it will be ascertained not to reach beyond thirty-five years. I do not, however, put this last forth as an accurate calculation. The mean age, at death, most persons are aware, is obtained in the following way, viz., by adding together the ages at death, for a given period, and dividing the number of years by the number of deaths. Now it happens that although this is an extremely easy method of constructing a table of mortality, it is, nevertheless, open to the suspicion of being oftentimes very fallacious, since the ages at death must vary considerably, every year, according to the prevalence or not of particular epidemics. If typhus fever prevails, the average age at death would be necessarily high, because more adults than children generally fall victims to that disease. On the other hand, if scarlet fever, measles, or whooping cough prevails, the average age at death would be very low, in consequence of such epidemics attacking and carrying off children almost exclusively. I mention this because I would by no means have it thought that I was endeavouring to exaggerate. Most accurate calculations, however, have been made for districts occupying a similar position, and having a similar

inverse ratio with the increase of population! and this, it is believed, is owing to the adoption of many wise sanitary measures and improvements since this address was delivered in 1848. The sixty-six deaths amongst the labouring classes out of the eighty-nine which occurred in 1844, must be looked upon by all as being as excessive on the side of the poor as, ten years afterwards, viz., in 1854, it can be proved to be the very reverse. In the latter year, only thirty-five pauper deaths took place out of one thousand three hundred and sixty-three cases of pauper sickness! This gives two and a half per cent. of deaths only in that year, although it was one in which a serious outbreak of cholera occurred. To what further extent the rate of mortality in this parish admits of being reduced, with the increased legal powers of carrying out efficient sanitary measures under the new District Board of Works, it is impossible to estimate.

mixed population to that of the towns and villages of this union, and it has been invariably found that the average age at death, amongst the poor in those places, has been far lower than amongst the more wealthy classes. It is sufficient, then, for our present purpose, to state this fact without entering into minute calculations respecting it. And this brings us to consider another fact in relation to our sanitary condition, viz., that the excess of sickness, apart from the mortality, is most decidedly on the side of the poor. Most true is it, as stated in an official circular, issued by the Board of Health, that "the Union Medical Officers, whose duties take them to the relief of the destitute sick, are necessarily familiar with the places in which disease is most prevalent and fatal," and "that these are invariably found to be the dirtiest localities, where, consequently, the cleansing operations are most required." That this holds good in the case of Putney no person can speak with greater confidence than myself. Out of about two hundred registered cases of sickness, for the most part protracted and severe, occurring amongst the poor during a certain period of the year, there were as many as fifty-one cases of disorder and disease, the accompanying fevers of which were of a decided remittent character,—three or four having run into pure typhus. These cases invariably occurred in localities badly drained, badly cleansed, and badly ventilated. Frequently three or four of the same family, or inmates of the same houses suffered about the same time; relapses also were very frequent in these places. All these affected districts have the same character. The places are, with few exceptions, narrow and confined, without pavement, badly cleansed, and worse drained,—many of them not drained at all; the houses generally ill-constructed, without the means of cleanliness, and, I may say, in too many instances, of decency. A single private closet to six or eight houses is an arrangement adopted in some few places in the parish. In parts, indeed, where these places are provided for the poor, in sufficient numbers, they will be found generally of

such a miserable kind, and so ill-constructed and badly placed, as to prove nuisances of the worst kind, and most fruitful sources of disease instead of conveniences to the residents. I could point out more than one house in which the soakage from an adjoining cesspool has caused the paint to change to a leaden hue in both sitting and sleeping room, and food placed away, in the only cupboard, to become tainted in a single night !

That such localities as I have referred to, in whatever town or quarter we may look for them, are the familiar haunts of all the most severe diseases,—that they are the homes of fever, and the hot-beds of pestilence,—may, I am quite sure, be proved by any Registrar of Deaths who would be at the trouble to go through his books, and to note down all the fever cases which had terminated fatally, during a given period, and the places in which they had occurred. Looking through the register of this parish for five years, from 1844 to 1848, and taking out all the fatal cases, certified as typhus fever, during that period, I find that they have been about a dozen in number, and that the sufferers have been persons who were residing at the time in the vicinities of the very places I spoke of just now. Precisely the same dirty localities yielded likewise, during the same period, nearly all the deaths that took place from small pox, measles, and scarlet fever.

Can there, then, be a better proof of the cleansing operations being required in these localities ?

In some few districts in the vicinity of London the rate of mortality is as low as one in sixty-three, as at Stamford Hill, and one in ninety-one, as at Dulwich. I have already informed you that it is, according to the calculations I have been enabled to make, one in fifty-six in this town. It follows, then, that Putney is a less healthy suburb than either Stamford Hill or Dulwich, although the facilities for drainage and supply of water is, I believe, at Dulwich, at least, in no way superior to those of Putney. Why, therefore, should this waste of life in our otherwise favoured district go unrestrained ? The difference in the geological

condition of the soil will not, as many may imagine, account for the disparity in the rate of mortality between this and the districts with which I have compared it. The soil in this district is, indeed, most favourable for drainage. The greater part of Putney also stands on ground presenting a natural declivity, whilst that portion which lies comparatively low, and in the vicinity of the river, has the vast advantage of being thoroughly ventilated by the currents of air caused by the tide of the Thames each time it ebbs and flows. Were it not for these tide breezes, which waft many impurities away, almost as soon as generated, it is not unreasonable to suppose that some of the localities, in this union, which border the Thames, would be far more unhealthy than they are found to be at the present time.

In all well ordered towns and villages the most essential things, in relation to the public health, are paving, draining, and cleansing the streets, courts, and alleys. A good pavement, it should be borne in mind, is the principal conduit, if I may so speak, to a drain or sewer. Where the pavement is defective or absent, there, I apprehend, you will invariably find the foundations of houses damp from the absorption of the rain water by the soil. In such cases there is usually dampness both without and within. There is dampness from without from the evaporation which is continually taking place from the surface of the unpaved soil, and there is dampness from within from the gradual soakage of water into the foundations; hence, by neglected or absent pavements, the inhabitants of a town are saddled with some of the very worst evils which it is possible to conceive*.

“ But, besides the moisture which falls upon us from

* At the period when these observations were made, scarcely half the High Street of Putney had any pavement, the footway, more especially on one side, consisting merely of a gravel walk, and extending, with here and there a patch of small irregular stones, from the present railway station to the church. At the lower part of the town there is now a substantial pavement, but there is a considerable space on both sides of the street still requiring attention.

the clouds," remarks an able writer upon sanitary measures, "we are daily bringing into our streets and our abodes both water from springs, and wells, and rivers, and also various other matters, liquid and solid, for food, and for many other uses; of which matters, a very large amount, and ultimately the whole, or nearly so, becomes refuse, and must somehow be got rid of. Now, a perfect system of sewers is adapted for the disposal of all such refuse matters, whether liquid or solid,—the one helping to float away the other, and the rain, as it falls, washing all out clean. And such a system, to be perfect, must clear off every kind of refuse out of the precincts of the house and of the town, before it has begun to decompose and putrify; and then the town atmosphere would not only be as dry as that of the open country, but as free from everything that is offensive and injurious, as far, at least, as this refuse matter is concerned. But if there be no efficient public sewers,—if the refuse be merely put out of sight in cesspools and dust bins, or in sewers, which, for want of proper fall, are full of stagnant filth, and act as extended cesspools,—if there be no drains from each house into the public sewers, and no traps or valves, or flaps, at each opening of sewer and of drain,—*if there be no good pavement, nor any well formed roadway impervious to moisture*,—in such a case, and in proportion as these several points have in any case been neglected, there, not only the rain, but all the water used for washing, cooking, and manufacturing, however filthy it may have become, and all the refuse and excremental matter of every kind, accumulating hour by hour, and day by day, and year by year, except so far as it may be partially removed by the offensive and degrading process of manual labour, must be left to rot on the surface, and to sink into the soil, liable to be stirred up anew by each shower that falls, and ready to yield to the sun as it shines, and to the wind as it blows, vapour charged and tainted with disease and death."

These are indeed important truths, well and forcibly

expressed, and I conceive that they must be acknowledged as such by all who have listened to their detail. I trust they will not be without their effect in impressing upon those who have a property or any other interest in the district, and upon those who are kindly disposed towards their poorer neighbours, the necessity of looking more closely into these matters than they have hitherto done. Let us turn now to another part of our subject,—the water supply of the district. I have a very strong opinion, indeed, from the liability of the water in many of the localities in which the poor reside to become contaminated by the numerous cesspools in the vicinity of the wells, that the use of such fluid filth for drinking and cooking purposes is a fruitful source of disease; and it is a very great question with me whether it will not, one day or other, be demonstrated that the drinking of such impure water gives rise to cholera in too many instances, and possibly to many other diseases of which we at present know not the origin. I anxiously look forward to the day when these contaminated wells shall be closed altogether, and when good and wholesome water shall be supplied to the poor, in an unlimited quantity, by a water company having mains running directly through the district*.

Of equal importance to the sanitary welfare of the poor, as it is to every other class of inhabitants, is pure air, also in an unlimited quantity. Impure air may be set down as the one great cause of excessive sickness and of excessive mortality, wherever manifested. The causes of this impurity of air are many and various. They are chiefly, however, emanations from decaying animal and vegetable matter suffered to accumulate in the neighbourhood of dwellings, or arising from open cesspools, untrapped gully

* Two companies have now their mains running through portions of the district. Water in abundance may therefore be said to be brought to the very lips of the inhabitants. It is to be hoped, then, that one of the first acts of the newly-constituted sanitary authority will be to see that the labouring classes are not doomed, by reason of their poverty, to thirst, like Tantalus, for one of the greatest necessities of life, when there is so much within their reach.

holes, and badly constructed drains and sewers. It is one of the best established truths ever recorded, that these emanations give rise to typhus and remittent fevers, and encourage the spread of those as of all other contagious and epidemic diseases.

Besides these, which are external to the dwelling places of the poor, there are others in constant operation tending to as greatly deteriorate the air within as without. In many of the badly constructed houses of the poor, the products of respiration and of perspiration become so often mixed with the foul emanations of the closely approximating cesspool and drain, that the air, damp moreover with the washing and drying of clothes, and other domestic operations, which have, from want of space, too frequently to be performed in the one living and sleeping room of the family, becomes converted into a most virulent poison—a poison, indeed, which cannot by any person, however robust, be long inhaled without producing upon the constitution the most debilitating and deleterious effects.

The crowding of a large number of human beings into one small and badly ventilated cottage, and families and lodgers into single rooms, is another and a very great source of impurity to the air, to say nothing of the moral evils which are too well known to arise from that practice. Such a condition of the courts, lanes, and alleys, in which the poor take up their abodes, must necessarily give rise to filthy habits—and such habits, I need not tell you, are not soon broken into when once formed. Hence it follows, that, in such neighbourhoods as I have described, filth, disease, destitution, and crime, come often to dwell together as natural and inseparable companions*.

* There is reason to believe that, although great good has been effected by the interference of Government with the lodging houses in the poorer districts, overcrowding still goes on to an extent that is productive of much mischief. When this address was delivered many small houses were known to the lecturer as being inhabited by Irish families, which at night, when the inmates were said to be housed and bedded, were very little better a point of salubrity than what he should conceive was the Black Hole of Calcutta on a certain memorable occasion.

Putney, as I have before remarked, is a town that has for many years enjoyed the reputation of being exceedingly healthy,—and so it undoubtedly is, if we shut our eyes to the widely spread sources which vitiate the atmosphere in such places as Brewhouse lane and Cock's buildings, and look only upon our delightful and salubrious heath, and comparatively clean and open High street, as constituting the entire parish. It is too much the case to form a judgment of the sanitary condition of a place from the appearance of cleanliness and comfort in those portions of it inhabited by the more wealthy classes, and it is to be feared that the condition of a poor man's dwelling, when it happens to be badly constructed, is but too frequently considered a necessary portion of his lot. In this boasted age of philanthropy this really should not be*.

When sickness or death actually takes place in some of the wretched dwellings of the poor, more particularly in the crowded districts of the Metropolis, scenes occasionally occur, the very thought of which ought to rouse the most apathetic to exertion. I will not harrow your feelings by a recital of any of the many heart-rending scenes I have witnessed in some of my visits to the sick poor, even in this town,—suffice it to say I have been often pained beyond measure by what I have beheld. The condition of a community cannot be sound which permits these scenes to take place; and the question which I desire to ask of you is—is this district exempt from them? By the statistics I have already laid before you, I have, I trust,

* Both the places mentioned above, viz., Brewhouse lane and Cock's buildings, have since undergone some improvement, but are still in anything but a satisfactory condition. The vicinity of Cock's buildings abounds in cesspools, and the water obtained in the neighbourhood is consequently unfit to drink. In 1854, Dr. Hassall examined, with the writer, the water obtainable throughout this locality, and that gentleman pronounced it as bad as any he had ever seen. There is no drainage whatever to the cottages in this crowded neighbourhood. The sanitary requirements of Cock's buildings, Isabella place, Seymour row, Alpha place, and adjacent parts, will be found more extensive and numerous than in any other locality in the town. Several deaths occurred from cholera in this neighbourhood, both in 1840 and 1854.

succeeded in convincing you of the general fact, that much unnecessary sickness takes place in most communities, and I trust also that I have as fully established the special fact, that our own locality forms no exception to the rule.

It is a fact that never should be lost sight of, that bad habits, engendered by the causes I have enumerated, have a powerful influence on the young, and that children, brought up amidst filth and wretchedness, do little credit to the best education that can be afforded them. The evil examples witnessed but too frequently at home will assuredly, in a great measure, neutralize the advantages they ought to gain from instruction at school. To raise, then, the moral aspect of our district, it is surely worth our while to take sanitary reform into our serious consideration. We must bear in mind that the evils complained of are, for the most part, beyond the power of the working classes themselves to remedy. If landlords will not remedy the evils which are so apparent—if the local authorities have no existing legal powers to remedy them, what, I would ask, is the alternative? I fear nothing short of the application of a Public Health Act to this town, in union with several of the neighbouring towns and villages*.

In Richmond, the necessary operations under an Act of this kind have been already commenced. If the recommendations of the official surveyor, Mr. Donaldson, are to have any weight with the Government Commission, it may reasonably be expected that this Commission will not be long before it turns its attention to Putney. At the conclusion of Mr. Donaldson's able report on the drainage, &c., of Richmond, occurs the following paragraph:—

“ Your attention has already been called to the extensive area drained by the Latchmere Brook, which includes a

* The advent of the “Metropolis Local Management Act,” now in operation, and embracing within its scope all the towns and villages in the Wandsworth and Clapham Union, is here predicted,—if, indeed, it can be called a prediction, when the necessity for some such interference of the Legislature was clearly seen so long ago as 1848.

portion of Kingston-on-Thames, where a want of drainage is complained of: and Mortlake, Kew, Barnes, and PUTNEY also require attention."

The surveyors and the other authorities of the several localities in this union have, I am fully persuaded, at all times manifested the most laudable zeal, and the most benevolent intentions in endeavouring to improve their sanitary condition; but all they can do to remove the manifold sources of impurity around them is totally insufficient for the purpose. Have they any power, it may be asked, to convert blind alleys into open and healthy thoroughfares? Have they any power to widen streets, to pave or to drain the same? Have they any power to compel landlords to provide wholesome dwellings for their tenants? or rather, have they any power to prevent the letting of such dwellings to the poor until they are rendered wholesome and fit to be inhabited? Have they, indeed, any power to alter or amend the condition of their town at all? If they exert the little power they fancy they do possess, is it not with fear and trembling lest they should commit themselves or some illegal act?

There is reason to believe that we have already effected some good by putting in force the provisions of the short Act for the removal of nuisances; but we must ultimately avail ourselves of a Public Health Act if we would effect *all* that is required. To the operation of such an Act there can be no doubt, whether we think proper to court it, or to oppose it, we must eventually submit ourselves. Will it not be to our interest to do so? If there are any of you disposed to put in the plea of vested interests against the operations of such a measure, I would bid you listen to what that quaint but much admired writer, Thomas Carlyle, has said in his interesting work of "Past and Present."

"To whatsoever vested interest, or such like stood up, gainsaying merely, 'I shall lose profits,' the willing legislature would answer, 'Yes; but my sons and daughters will gain health, and life, and a soul.'" To gain a soul, what vested interest on earth should be

suffered to stand in the way? Answer me that, any of you who are present, and answer it as the benevolent Carlyle has made the humanity of England answer another and nearly as important a query. Alluding to the manufacturing interest, and the employment of children in factories, he writes—"What is to become of our cotton trade, our invaluable cotton trade?"

"The humanity of England answers steadfastly,—'Deliver me those rickety, perishing souls of infants, and let your cotton trade take its chance. God himself commands the one thing, not God himself especially the other thing. We cannot have prosperous cotton trades at the expense of keeping the devil a partner in them.'" The idea of this gifted writer might, I think, be carried out still further, and applied most appropriately to our present subject. Fancy, then, some absentee owner of a row of tumble down houses in some foul alley or pent up court bewailing in his ignorance of the benefits in store for him, the fancied prospect of decreasing rents, and asking the question—What is to become of my profits upon the bricks and mortar I have caused to be so cunningly put together to shelter the poor? Fancy, then, the same humanity, answering even more steadfastly than before—We cannot, nay, we will not, have even prosperous rent-rolls at the expense of affording dwelling places for cholera, typhus fever, and other death-dealing pestilences to riot in.

In a matter of this kind the best appeal we can make is, perhaps, to self-interest. Let us see, then, if there is any one class of the community whose interests are not really and truly cared for and promoted by Government interference with the sanitary regulations of the people. How are the rich and the well to do affected by the neglect of sanitary measures? We may say to persons so favoured, if the possession of abundance has given you a slight advantage over the more indigent of your fellow creatures, reflect on the risks you still run of contracting many of the diseases and fevers that are the offspring of filth and

poverty from those whose lot is contemporary and in vicinity with your own. Can you say with any shew of reason, then, that you have no interest in securing good and efficient sanitary regulations?

Are you charitably disposed, and have you never felt how miserably inadequate has been all you could spare from your private purse to the palliation of the innumerable evils arising from sickness and premature death amongst the poor?

Are you a landlord, and have you never remarked that your rent-roll has always presented a more satisfactory appearance when your tenantry have been healthy than it has when they have been unhealthy? Is it nothing that your property should be enhanced in value through the carrying out of the provisions of benevolent measures which have for their object the isolation of both you and your poorer neighbours and your tenants from the contaminating influences of pestilence and fever?

Are you simply a ratepayer, and will you not acknowledge that it is far better to be moderately assessed in support of wise and philanthropic measures which are intended to benefit alike all classes of the community, than to be heavily taxed to keep hundreds of the labouring poor in workhouses and prisons, who have been driven, perhaps, first into sickness and then into destitution and crime through breathing the pestilential atmospheres of unwholesome localities and of ill-ventilated dwellings and workshops?

It may be safely affirmed that the annual money cost of loathsome squalor largely exceeds that of decent cleanliness. Who is there possessed of common understanding that will dispute the correctness of the axiom that "Health (especially in the case of the poor) is but a synonyme for wealth?" and who is there on the other hand that will undertake to point out to me a straighter or a surer road to ruin than through the cottage which encloses within its walls squalor, disease, and loathsome pestilence? To quote the words of a report of the Health of Towns

Association, "Sanatory reform, therefore, is demanded not merely for the sake of health and life, but for the sake of decency, propriety, morality, and religion. It must have the suffrages of the labouring class, who are the chief victims of public and private negligence; of the rate-payers, on whom fall the burdens of the fever and consumption tax; of philanthropists, for its benevolence; of honest men, for its justice; of economists, for its practical wisdom; of clergymen, for its direct and obvious bearing on the highest interests of man."

In conclusion I must be allowed to express a hope that there are none in this assembly so obdurate as not to feel convinced that health is one of the greatest of all earthly blessings. None, I trust, are so mentally blind as not to understand that national sickness must ever be antagonistic to national strength, national happiness, and national prosperity. If this be admitted it surely becomes the duty of all to assist in carrying out those measures of reform, the design of which is to remove some of the saddest features in our social economy. Allow me, then, earnestly to entreat all who value their own and their families' health—all who have the good of the community, and especially that of the poorer portion of it, at heart, to come forward and do their duty as men, and in doing that promote their interests as citizens by taking advantage of the wise and most necessary measures which are now offered by the legislature to be placed at the disposal of all who ask for them.

I fear some of you will think that I have spoken out somewhat too boldly in some parts of this address. I would have you recollect, however, that I have been speaking on a matter too pregnant with good to allow of its being dealt with in any other way. I can but regret that some one more able than myself has not been employed in delivering to you these friendly admonitions, but if a zeal for your interest and the interest of society may be considered as in some degree atoning for the want of information and the talent of conveying it, I trust my presumption will not be visited with any very heavy censure.

A more favourable opportunity, perhaps, may not occur than this to express my gratitude to many of my fellow townsmen, and to the gentry, elergy, and professional men of the distriet, for having so kindly and considerately npheld and justified me in my offieial exertions at the present crisis ; and it affords me, I assure you, no small gratification to see so many working men and mechanics present this evening, seemingly taking as great an interest as any persons in the room in the questions I have, I fear, but very imperfectly brought under their notice. This voluntary attendanee on the part of the industrious classes is, I look upon it, a good augury for the future, and I thank those persons as sincerely as I do you, reverend sir, for presiding, and the gentlemen, tradesmen, and officers of the parish for having honoured me with their presence, and for having so patiently listened to my humble exhortations.

Towards those of my fellow townsmen who have shewn an inelination to somewhat oppose the measures which, as a public offieer, I have been compelled to assist in carrying into effect, I entertain the same good feeling as I ever did. I do not respect men the less because they differ from me in opinion ; but, while they elaim for themselves the liberty of holding and expressing opinions, they ought not to refuse to extend the same rights of eitizenship to their opponents. Wrongs can never be redressed whilst this state of feeling exists. It is an unhealthy state of feeling, and the sooner it is eorreeted the better. Is it not that multiplying wants should knit us more elosely together. that we are brought so near to one another in communities ? Is it not that we should better understand one another's perils and sufferings ? Is it not that we should desire and seek each other's highest good ? If this be admitted, then but little argument is needed to prove that in achieving this good, which is the supreme interest of a community, all other interests are at the same time promoted.